Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

17 April 2008

Original: English

Second session
Geneva, 28 April-9 May 2008

Steps to promote the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and the realization of the goals and objectives of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East

Report submitted by Japan

1. Lack of progress in the establishment of a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in the Middle East poses a serious problem for the credibility of the NPT. Japan supported, and continues to fully support, the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which calls for the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems. In this regard, following the previous sessions, Japan again joined, at the sixty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly, the consensus adoption of resolution 62/18 of 5 December 2007, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East".

2. The establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East will ultimately require the adherence by all States in the region to the NPT, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by all States in the region would also be a substantial and practical step towards this end. Japan has been actively taking part in the international efforts to encourage the universal adherence to these multilateral instruments on the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. As part of such endeavours, Japan supported the resolution (GC(51)/res/17) entitled "Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East" at the fifty-first regular session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on 20 September 2007. Furthermore, Japan on various occasions urged the Israeli Government to become a party to the NPT, the BWC and the CWC, as well as to ratify the CTBT as soon as possible. Japan has also urged the Governments of the Syrian Arab Republic, Egypt and the Islamic Republic of Iran, respectively, to join at the earliest date the relevant WMD-related treaties to which they are not parties.

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3. It is imperative that compliance with those legal instruments should be fully assured. Japan has urged the Iranian Government to comply with the requirements of all the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iran's nuclear programme, including the suspension of all enrichment-related activities and the ratification and implementation of the Additional Protocol. In this context, Japan also stresses the necessity of strengthening the IAEA safeguards system, which plays a vital role in underpinning the NPT. Japan strongly believes that the conclusion of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols by all States in the region is essential for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Japan, with the aim of achieving universal adherence to the comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols, is ready to share its expertise and to provide technical assistance to those interested States in the region.

4. Japan is firmly committed to supporting the Middle East peace process, considering that it should be the key for regional stability, which is a vital factor in establishing the conditions for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Based on the recognition that the only way to achieve peace in the Middle East is through the realization of the peaceful coexistence between the two nations of Israel and Palestine, Japan has been making its utmost efforts to that end. In particular, Japan has been engaging in the following measures:

(a) Using its neutral position of favouring neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians, Japan maintains high-level political dialogue with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority in order to encourage them to advance the peace process. For instance, following the visit of the then Foreign Minister, Taro Aso, to Israel and the Palestinian territories in August 2007, the Government of Japan invited Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to Japan in February 2008, in order to support his commitment to making every effort to conclude a peace agreement with the Palestinian side before the end of 2008;

(b) In the economic sphere, Japan has been actively involved in assisting the Palestinians since the Oslo Accords of 1993. As of March 2008, Japan has disbursed a total of more than $938 million in assistance to the Palestinians, and is committed to extending a further $150 million, which was pledged at the International Conference of the Donors for the Palestinian State in Paris in December 2007;

(c) The Government of Japan has actively been initiating and sponsoring various projects that will contribute to confidence-building between the Israelis and the Palestinians. In addition to that, Japan, based on its efforts in the fields mentioned above, proposed and is steadily promoting in cooperation with Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority an initiative to create "the corridor for peace and prosperity" in an area of the Jordan Valley for the purpose of creating a further viable Palestinian State.